PLANET COMICS
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PLANET
COMICS
No.62
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FICTION HOUSE MAGAZINES
AZTARN, VOLTAN SUPREMUS, CHALLENGES HUNT BOWMANS' LEADERSHIP OF
LOST WORLD!
also MYSTA MOON GODDESS
STAR PIRATE
AND OTHER TOP STORIES OF TOMORROW'S WORLD!
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A FICTION HOUSE MAGAZINE

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PLANET COMICS

The LOST WORLD

BY THORNECLIFF HERRICK

GENERAL PROCLAMATION

THE EARTH COUNCIL, HAVING MET IN A FREE AND OPEN SESSION, HAS DECIDED THAT FOR THE PRESERVATION OF EARTH CIVILIZATION AND CULTURE UNDER VOLTAN TYRANNY, ALL CHILDREN OVER TEN YEARS OF AGE SHALL BE REGISTERED IN THE SCHOOL OF SCIENTIFIC REHABILITATION AT THE TOWN KNOWN IN THE TWENTIETH EARTH EPOCH AS ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND.

SIGNED
Hunt Bowman

MEANWHILE, IN THE RUINS OF BALTIMORE...

NO-NO, JIM, I TELL YOU I WON'T DO IT! THAT SILLY COUNCIL WILL NEVER TAKE LITTLE KERMIT AWAY FROM ME—NEVER!

BUT ALICE—IT'S THE LAW! THE PROCLAMATION WAS SIGNED BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL—HUNT BOWMAN!

BAH—YOU SPINELESS JELLY-FISH! WHO GAVE BOWMAN THE RIGHT TO VIOLATE OUR INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM? IF ONLY I WERE A MAN—I'D SHOW YOU HOW TO GET RID OF HIS KIND!

YOU'RE RIGHT, ALICE! NO ONE IS GOING TO DICTATE TO US! BY HEAVENS—I'LL SHOW HIM!

GEORGE EVANS

I'VE GOT TO DO IT NOW WHILE HUNT BOWMAN IS HERE IN BALTIMORE! WAIT— THAT CROWD DOWN THERE!

AS BELOW...

THE COUNCIL'S IDEA IS VERY SENSIBLE. WE MUST TRAIN OUR CHILDREN TO SURVIVE UNDER VOLTAN RULE!

DON'T BE A FOOL, MAN! THE VOLTANS HAVEN'T BOTHERED US IN AGES. IF THEY HEAR ABOUT THIS, WE'RE IN FOR TROUBLE!

THAT'S WHAT I SAY! WHY SHOULD WE SUFFER BECAUSE OF SOME STUPID LAW? I'D SURE LIKE TO GIVE BOWMAN A PIECE OF MY MIND!

WELL, HERE'S YOUR CHANCE, FRIEND! THAT'S HIM COMING OUT OF THAT BUILDING OVER THERE!

I CAME TO BALTIMORE, ELDER SIMON, TO SEE WHAT YOUR REACTIONS WOULD BE TO THE COUNCIL'S RULING.

PERSONALLY I'M ALL FOR IT, HUNT, BUT I'M AFRAID THE PEOPLE MAY THINK DIFFERENTLY. WHY DON'T YOU EXPLAIN IT TO THEM, NOW?

THE ELDER'S RIGHT, HUNT! YOU'VE GOT TO MAKE THE PEOPLE REALIZE THAT THIS LAW IS FOR THEIR OWN GOOD!

I KNOW, LYSSA. BUT I'M NO ORATOR. WHY DON'T YOU SPEAK TO THEM?

ALL RIGHT, HUNT, I WILL! FRIENDS— LISTEN TO ME. I WANT TO TELL YOU OF THE BENEFITS OF THIS NEW LAW!

WE ON EARTH MUST BUILD FOR THE FUTURE— AND THAT FUTURE LIES IN THE EDUCATION OF OUR CHILDREN! DON'T WE ALL AGREE ON THAT?

NO—WE WON'T STAND FOR DICTATORS ON EARTH! DOWN WITH THE COUNCIL AND HUNT BOWMAN!

GOOD GRIEF, HUNT, SOMEONE IN THE CROWD HURLED THAT CLUB AT US! WHAT'S WRONG?

THEY'RE IN A HOSTILE MOOD, LYSSA! YOU'D BETTER LET ME HANDLE IT NOW! SPEAK UP - WHAT COWARD THREW THAT CLUB?

I DID, HUNT BOWMAN! NO ONE ON EARTH CAN FORCE JIM HUNTER AND HIS FAMILY TO OBEY ANY HALF-BAKED SCHEME YOU AND LYSSA INFLUENCED THE COUNCIL TO PASS!

YOU'RE WRONG, JIM, IT WASN'T OUR IDEA! THE COUNCIL'S A DEMOCRATIC ORGANIZATION - RULED BY NO ONE MAN! WE LISTENED TO ALL THE MEMBERS, THEN...

SHUT YOUR MOUTH, WOMAN!! WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THESE THINGS?

OUT OF MY WAY - I'LL TAKE CARE OF THE MAN RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS!

STAND BACK, JIM! DON'T BE A FOOL AND TRY TO USE VIOLENCE!

SAVE YOUR BREATH, BOWMAN, YOU'RE NOT TALKING YOUR WAY OUT OF THIS! I'LL...OOH!

I WARNED YOU JIM! IF YOU CAN'T LISTEN TO REASON, MAYBE THIS WILL HELP YOU UNDERSTAND!

LOOK - BOWMAN STRUCK HIM! JIM IS RIGHT - HUNT'S BEGINNING TO USE A BULLY'S TACTICS! COME ON, LET'S SHOW HIM THAT HE'S NOT GETTING AWAY WITH IT!

NOW YOU'RE TALKING, MEN! WE'LL TEACH BOWMAN THAT EARTH IS NO PLACE FOR WOULD-BE TYRANTS!

WHAT'LL I DO? THE MOB IS TURNING AGAINST HUNT! THEY'LL KILL HIM!

MEANWHILE..

- YOUR EXCELLENCY, AZTARN, BEHOLD! BELOW THE RUINS OF WASHINGTON ARE. IT THE CAPITAL OF ONE OF EARTH'S GREATEST COUNTRIES WAS!

SO THIS PART OF THE NEW LAND I RULE WILL, CAPTAIN?

YES, MIGHTY AZTARN, AND YOU THIS EARTH MORE DIFFICULT TO CONTROL FIND WILL THAN SOME OF THE OTHER PLANETS YOU CONQUERED.

BAH, CAPTAIN, THEY ALL ALIKE ARE— SNIVELLING, COWERING NATIONS, WHO STRONG LEADER LIKE ME NEED!

THE HORDES OF SATURN DID I NOT CRUSH, AND THE MIGHTY BRUTES OF MARS TO VOLTAN SOVEREIGNTY BEND? WHY, I THE KNOWLEDGE OF MILITARY CONQUEST FROM MY GRANDFATHER WHO DESTROYED EARTH LEARNED!

BUT NOTHING LIKE THESE EARTH-DEVILS, AZTARN SEEN YOU HAVE! AT THE VIDEO, LOOK, SIRE! THAT WHITE BUILDING DOWN THERE PALACE OF THEIR RULER WAS!

MY ANCESTORS CERTAINLY A THOROUGH JOB OF DESTRUCTION ON THESE EARTHLINGS HEAPED. THEY NO WILL MUST HAVE LEFT!

YOU WRONG ARE, AZTARN! THEY TREACHEROUS AND REBELLIOUS ARE, AND LIKE OTHER WILD BEASTS WHO THIS EARTH ROAM, FEARED MUST BE! LOOK!

AMONG THE GUTTED RELICS OF A ONCE PROUD EARTH, HUGE PRIMITIVE MONSTERS ENACT A SAVAGE DRAMA OF SURVIVAL BEFORE THE VOLTANS' EYES...

THOSE BRUTES EVER SINCE OUR GLORIOUS INVASION GIGANTIC HAVE GROWN! THEY JUST ONE OF THE MANY DANGERS ARE!

THEY NO FEAR FOR ME HOLD! NOW MORE ANXIOUS THIS STRANGE WORLD TO SEE I AM! PILOT - THIS CRAFT IMMEDIATELY LAND!

As... STOP, HUNT-PLEASE! THIS VIOLENCE WILL GET YOU NOWHERE!

LET GO OF ME, LYSSA, I'VE GOT TO TEACH THIS CRAZY FOOL A LESSON IN DEMOCRACY!

HAH-THAT'S THE ROT ALL YOU DICTATORS SPOUT! IF THE PEOPLE DON'T LIKE A LAW, RAM IT DOWN THEIR THROATS ANYWAY!

HE'S RIGHT, HUNT! NOW STOP THIS FOOLISH SQUABBLING! THESE PEOPLE WILL HAVE TO BE CONVINCED SOME OTHER WAY! PERHAPS IF ELDER SIMON SPOKE TO THEM...

ALL RIGHT, LYSSA, AT LEAST IT'S WORTH A TRY. I HOPE HE HAS BETTER LUCK THAN I DID!

LET ME REASON WITH THEM A WHILE, HUNT. I MAY BE ABLE TO CALM THEM. FRIENDS—CEASE THIS CHILDISH BICKERING AND LISTEN TO ME!

COME ON, LYSSA, LET'S VISIT THE SCHOOL WHILE SIMON IS TALKING TO THEM!

GOOD IDEA, HUNT, IT'LL GIVE YOU A CHANCE TO COOL DOWN. TRY NOT TO BE TOO ANGRY WITH THESE PEOPLE!

I AM TRYING, LYSSA, BUT MY BLOOD BOILS WHEN I THINK HOW BLIND THEY ARE SOME TIMES!

SOON—

FRIENDS, WE MUST NOT QUARREL OVER THIS NEW EDUCATION LAW! THE COUNCIL PASSED IT TO... OHH!

SILENCE, OLD MAN, WE'RE NOT IN THE MOOD TO LISTEN TO EMPTY WORDS! I'LL SPEAK NOW!

HEAR ME, BROTHERS, WE'RE ALL IN THE SAME BOAT! ARE WE GOING TO ALLOW THE COUNCIL TO TELL US WHAT TO WITH OUR OWN FLESH AND BLOOD? I SAY NO, AND IF YOU HAVE AN OUNCE OF RED BLOOD IN YOU—FOLLOW ME! I'LL SHOW YOU WHAT TO DO!

MEANWHILE, NEAR THE CAPITOL BUILDING...

THERMAL LANDING JETS OPEN ARE! FOR LANDING STAND BY, AZTARN!

VERY GOOD, CAPTAIN. NOW MAYBE WE SOME OF THE EARTHMEN FIND SHALL!

WE TOO CAUTIOUS CANNOT BE, AZTARN! THESE GAMMA MUTANTS OF ANIMALS ABNORMAL HAVE GROWN. COSMIC FORCE THEIR BODIES ENLARGED HAVE!

BAH, CAPTAIN, YOU LIKE A FRIGHTENED OLD WOMAN BABBLE. WAIT—MY FOOT IN THIS SLIME, SINKS! AND LISTEN—THAT SUCKING SOUND!

HURRY-HURRY, PLEASE—HIS WEIGHT ME CRUSHES! I... BREATHE CANNOT... OOH!

HOLD ON, MAN, MY DIS-RAY IT STOP WILL!

SWIFTLY...

WHY, CAPTAIN, A FORCE FIELD AROUND OUR SPACER DO YOUR MEN SET UP? WE TIME WASTING ARE!

NOT AT ALL, SIRE, WE AGAINST THE MONSTERS ON EARTH THE SHIP PROTECT MUST!

LOOK—WE A CRAZED CREATURE DISTURBED HAVE! HE AT ONE OF OUR MEN SNAPS!

HELP—HELP, THE MUD ME SLOWS DOWN. I QUICKLY MOVE CANNOT! THIS BEAST ME KILL WILL!

THERE, VILE BEAST, AZTARN YOU A FITTING END GIVE SHALL! YOU NO LONGER ME OR MY MEN TO MENACE LIVE WILL!

NOW THE DANGERS OF WHICH YOU SPOKE, I SEE! QUICKLY, YOUR MEN AHEAD IN THE SPACER TO HEADQUARTERS AT NEW YORK SEND! YOU AND I IN SMALL CRUISER FOLLOW WILL!

MEANWHILE, AT THE NEW SCHOOL IN THE OLD BALTIMORE DOCKYARDS...

HELLO, HUNT-LYSSA BACK SO SOON? HOW DID EVERYTHING GO IN THE CITY?

NOT SO GOOD, I'M AFRAID, CHRIS. THE PEOPLE DIDN'T TAKE TO OUR LAW ON EDUCATION AT ALL!

FRANKLY, I'M DISCOURAGED! I THINK I'LL ASK THE COUNCIL TO REPEAL IT AT THE NEXT MEETING! WE CAN'T OPPOSE THE WILL OF THE MAJORITY!

DON'T TALK RUBBISH HUNT. YOU CAN'T ALLOW ONE OVER-PROTECTIVE PARENT TO RUIN ALL OF CHRIS' WORK AT THIS SCHOOL!

WHY - JUST LOOK AT THOSE CHILDREN THERE! WITH THE PROPER TRAINING, THESE KIDS WILL BE ABLE TO REBUILD A BRAVE WORLD OF TOMORROW! THEY MUST HAVE THAT CHANCE!

AS ABOVE...

GOSH, JACK, IT WAS SURE SWELL OF PROFESSOR CHRIS TO LET US COME UP HERE. HEY, I WONDER WHAT THIS HANDLE IS FOR?

PETE, THE PROFESSOR WARNED US NOT TO TOUCH ANYTHING! GEE, STOP - I THINK SOMETHING'S STARTING TO MOVE!

LOOK OUT - THE BOOM ON THE HOIST IS SWINGING! THAT DEMOLITION BALL ON THE END OF IT IS FALLING!

BACK, LYSSA, THAT STEEL BALL WEIGHS TEN TONS - IT'S DEADLY!

GEE WHIZ, SIR, I'M SORRY! ARE YOU HURT? I GOT SO INTERESTED IN HOW THAT MACHINE WORKS, I DIDN'T REALIZE WHAT I WAS DOING. BUT GOLLY, I DID MAKE IT RUN, DIDN'T I?

YOU CERTAINLY DID, SON, BUT NO HARM DONE, SO RUN ALONG NOW!

DO YOU REALIZE LYSSA, WHAT SCIENTIFIC CURIOSITY THOSE KIDS SHOWED WITH THAT MACHINE? WHY JUST THINK OF WHAT THEY'LL DO WITH A LITTLE TRAINING! BY GEORGE, WE'VE GOT TO MAKE THIS PROGRAM A SUCCESS - AND WE WILL!

LATER, ON A TRAINING SHIP AT THE SCHOOL...

GOSH, PROFESSOR, SUPPOSE WHEN WE GROW UP WE HAD TO TAKE A SHIP OUT IN A FOG LIKE THIS? HOW WOULD WE KNOW WHERE WE WERE GOING?

VERY SIMPLE, LAD. I'LL EXPLAIN HOW THIS THING WE CALL A COMPASS OPERATES.

MEANWHILE, IN THE CHART ROOM...

WHILE THE OTHER STUDENTS ARE WITH PROFESSOR CHRIS IN THE WHEEL HOUSE, WE'RE GOING TO GET ACQUAINTED WITH THE INSTRUMENTS IN THIS CONTROL ROOM.

GOLLY, MISS LYSSA - WHAT'S THIS GADGET WITH THE SCREEN AND DIALS AND STUFF?

WHY, THIS IS RADAR, SON. IT HAS A BEAM WHICH HELPS SHOW IF ANYTHING IS IN THE WAY OF THE SHIP. WAIT - WATCH THE SCREEN, I'LL SWITCH IT ON.

SEE, ON A FOGGY DAY, LIKE THIS, ANY OBJECT NEAR THE BOAT WOULD APPEAR ON THE SCREEN AND... HUNT - LOOK AT THIS!

AS, ON AN APPROACHING BARGE...

GET READY, MEN, THERE'S ONE OF THOSE DEVILISH SHIPS ON WHICH THE COUNCIL WANTS TO IMPRISON OUR CHILDREN. STEADY, WE'RE CLOSING IN!

NOW - BOARD HER AND DESTROY THIS STEEL MONSTER AND AND HER TEACHERS BEFORE THEY ENSLAVE US! LET'S GO!

LEAD ON, JIM, WE'RE RIGHT BEHIND YOU. WE'LL TEAR THIS BOAT APART!

MEANWHILE...

HURRY, AZTARN, THE CRUISER. TO BE LAUNCHED ALL SET IS!

ALL RIGHT, MEN, THE FORCE FIELD DE-ENERGIZE! THE CAPTAIN AND I TO TAKE OFF GOING ARE!

SOON...

NOW, CAPTAIN, PERHAPS FROM THIS SLOWER SHIP SOME EARTHMEN WE SEE SHALL. I NEVER ANY EXCEPT ON PHOTO-IMAGE SEEN HAVE!

IN THIS FLIGHT TO HEADQUARTERS, WE ON ROUTE SOME SPOT MAY AZTARN!

BUT LOOK, CAPTAIN, HEAVY FOG EARTH COVERING IS! OUR VISION BLOCKED WILL BE!

NO, EXCELLENCY, I THE PENETRO-RADAR RAY SWITCH ON SHALL. WATCH!

THIS RAY ALSO CONCENTRATIONS OF EARTHMEN TO DISCOVER HELPS! LOOK — THE LIGHT FLASHES!

GOOD, CAPTAIN, THE SHIP DOWN TAKE! WE THIS INVESTIGATE MUST!

AS BELOW..

THERE THEY ARE, MEN! COME ON, LET'S GET 'EM!

LOOK, LYSSA, IT'S JIM HUNTER AGAIN! THIS LOOKS LIKE SERIOUS TROUBLE. QUICK, GET THE STUDENTS AWAY FROM HERE!

HURRY, BOYS, GET BELOW BEFORE... HUNTER — STAND BACK, YOU'RE MAD!

NO, LYSSA, NOT MAD, JUST SENSIBLE ENOUGH TO REALIZE THERE'S NO PLACE FOR YOU OR HUNT IN OUR WORLD!

THAT'S A SITUATION I'M GOING TO CORRECT RIGHT NOW. OHH.. YOU LITTLE WITCH!

WAIT, JIM, LOOK UP THERE — COMING IN OVER THE BOAT!

LOOK, AZTARN, EARTHMEN ON THAT BOAT ARE! NOW I YOU SHOW WILL HOW WE THEY HANDLE! WATCH- THE DISINTERGRO-RAY!

NO, YOU FOOL- STOP! I YOU NOT THEM TO BLAST, COMMAND! TOO LATE - THE RAY STRIKES!

AS BELOW...

LOOK OUT - THAT BLAST GOT THE RAIL! WE'RE GOING OVERBOARD!

HUNT - HUNT, WHERE ARE YOU? SAVE ME!

HANG ON, LYSSA, I'M TRYING TO REACH YOU! GREAT SCOTT - A VOLTAN SPACER'S BLASTING THIS BOAT TO BITS. WE HAVEN'T GOT A CHANCE!

THE FOG THICKER BECOMES, CAPTAIN! THE EARTHMAN'S BOAT FROM VIEW FADES!

THEN IT A LUCKY THING WAS THAT I IT SMASHED WHEN I DID! BUT WHY YOU ME TO STOP DID TRY?

BLUNDERING IDIOT, I AZTARN, THE ORDER GIVE! THIS NO WAY WITH THE EARTHMEN TO DEAL IS. IT ONLY THEM MORE CAREFUL MAKES!

THAT I KNOW, AZTARN BUT I THOUGHT THAT IT YOUR DESIRE THEIR SPIRIT COMPLETELY TO BREAK WAS!

YES - YES, FOOL, ONLY WE IT IN MY WAY DO SHALL! PLAN I HAVE WHICH NEVER FAILED HAS! FIRST, OUR VOLTAN TROOPS INTO ONE AREA THEM DRIVE SHALL - THEN, WITH A SINGLE BLOW, WE THEM CRUSH CAN!

MEANWHILE...

THANK GOODNESS YOU'RE ALIVE, HUNT! QUICKLY, GIVE ME A HAND WITH JIM HERE. THE BLAST KNOCKED HIM OUT!

STEADY, LYSSA, KEEP HIS HEAD ABOVE WATER! I'LL TAKE HIM TO SHORE.

ALL RIGHT NOW, HUNT, LET ME GET A GRIP ON HIM. I'LL HELP DRAG HIM ONTO THE DOCK.

GOOD, LYSSA, BUT HURRY—EVERY SECOND COUNTS! I'LL HAVE TO USE ARTIFICIAL RESPIRATION TO REVIVE HIM!

SOON...

WHY DID YOU SAVE ME, HUNT, WHY? I DIDN'T DESERVE IT AFTER WHAT I TRIED TO DO TO YOU!

NONSENSE, JIM, CAN'T YOU SEE NOW WHY I HAD TO SAVE YOU? IF WE FIGHT AMONG OURSELVES, HOW CAN WE EVER OVERCOME THE VOLTANS?

YOU'RE RIGHT, HUNT! I WAS JUST TOO BLIND TO SEE IT BEFORE! WE'VE GOT TO STAND UNITED. THAT'S OUR REAL STRENGTH AND HOPE OF STAMPING OUT THIS VOLTAN DOMINATION!

LATER...

BEFORE YOU GO, SON, JUST ONE WORD OF ADVICE! KNOWLEDGE IS POWER—SO GET AS MUCH AS YOU CAN, AND LEARN TO USE IT WISELY!

GEE, DAD, YOU BET I WILL! THIS IS SURE AN EXCITING DAY FOR ME!

AND FOR US, TOO, KERMIT! WE'RE VERY PROUD OF YOU, MY BOY, BECAUSE SOME DAY YOU'RE GOING TO HELP BRING US THE FREEDOM WE'VE DREAMED ABOUT FOR SO LONG! NOW—GO!

AW, GEE, CHEER UP, MOM—DON'T CRY! MR BOWMAN SAID I COULD SEE YOU ON SCHOOL HOLIDAYS, SO IT WON'T BE SO BAD! WELL—SO LONG, MOM AND DAD!

GOSH, HUNT, WITH ALL THIS EXCITEMENT OVER THE SUCCESS OF OUR SCHOOL, I ALMOST COMPLETELY FORGOT ABOUT THAT VOLTAN ATTACK ON US!

I DON'T THINK I EVER WILL, LYSSA, BECAUSE WHOEVER WAS IN THAT VOLTAN SPACER WITH THE BIG STAR ON IT HELPED TO UNITE US MORE THAN ANY EARTHMEN EVER COULD HAVE!

LOST WORLD APPEARS IN EVERY ISSUE OF PLANET COMICS!!

STAR PIRATE

BY LEN DODSEN

"SIGNAL RED...SIGNAL RED. SOLAR-SYSTEM DIGNITARIES VANISHING FROM PASSENGER LINERS IN MID-SPACE! IMPERATIVE TO FIND OUT HOW THIS IS BEING DONE. KIDNAPPING SUSPECTED..." THE I.P. BROADCAST HAD BLARED. AND LATER, ABOARD THE INTER-PLANETARY LINER, SON OF SATURN, TWO FIGURES WATCH FROM THE OBSERVODOME...

OKAY, BLACKY, GET SET...NOW'S OUR CHANCE! HERE COMES MINERAL ADMINISTRATOR BIRCH...NO ONE ELSE IN SIGHT!

RIGHT, STAR... AND HE'S HEADING FOR THE DOME GANG PLANK. THAT PUTS HIM RIGHT INTO OUR HOT LITTLE HANDS!

HIYA, MR. BIRCH...O-OOF! SO LONG, MR. BIRCH...WHEN YOU WAKE UP, YOU'RE GONNA BE TWINS!

DROP THE DRAMATICS, BLACKY... WE HAVEN'T GOT ALL DAY! I'LL STAND GUARD AT THIS CORRIDOR WHILE YOU TIE HIM UP!

SWIFT MOMENTS LATER...

HOLD STILL WHILE I TOUCH UP YOUR EYEBROWS...THERE! YOU'RE A DEAD RINGER FOR BIRCH!

I'D RATHER BE A LIVE RINGER! HOPE THE KIDNAPPERS DON'T SEE THROUGH THIS SCHEME... INCIDENTALLY, HOW D'YA KNOW BIRCH IS NEXT ON THE LIST?

SIMPLE...FIRST AROLD, THEN AXEN... BARTON.. NOW BIRCH! THEY'RE VERY METHODICAL KIDNAPPERS. SO LONG, FELLA...ALMOST TIME FOR YOUR LINER TO BLAST OFF!

Y-YEAH...YOU JUST TAIL IT DARN CLOSE IN THE JOLLY DODGER, Y'HEAR! IF I GET IN A JAM AND TWIDDLE MY WRIST SIGNAL, I WANT "BIRCH" TO GET SAVED!

MOMENTS LATER, IN THE DODGER.

THERE GOES THE LINER RIGHT ON SCHEDULE! NOW TO BLAST OFF AND FOLLOW... WAIT— THAT SOUND...

HEY, YOU.. WHAT THE DEVIL, IT'S A GIRL! WHO ARE YOU?

I KNOW WHO YOU ARE, STAR PIRATE... I RECOGNIZED YOUR SHIP UNDER THE DISGUISO-PLATES! I NEED YOUR HELP!

AS, IN THE SPACE-LINER...

GR-R R-STAR ALWAYS GETS ME INTO THE DARNDEST MESSES... UH-OH, THE DOOR VIZIO'S BUZZING... YEAH.. WHAT'CHA WANT?

STEWARD, SIR... A SPACE-OGRAM FOR YOU!

WAIT'LL I OPEN THE DOOR.. I— HEY, WHAT GOES!

IT'S BIRCH, ALL RIGHT—QUICK, BOYS... PARA-RAY HIM BEFORE HE CAN YELL!

THE KIDNAPPERS! STAR'S PLAN IS WORKING... BARELY GOT TIME TO SIGNAL ON THIS WRIST RA.. OH H-H-

SLEEP TIGHT, MISTER— TAKE IT!

WHILE YOU SAY YOUR FATHER WAS ONE OF THE MEN KIDNAPPED FROM MID-SPACE, MISS RANGE? BUT HOLD ON! BLACKY'S SIGNAL NO TIME TO TALK GOT TO BLAST OFF, NOW!

I'LL SWITCH ON THE INVISO-SHIELDS SO THE DODGER WON'T BE SPOTTED... THERE, NOW— IF WE'RE LUCKY, WE'LL SEE HOW THESE MYSTERIOUS KIDNAPPERS WORK!

WHILE, IN THE SPEEDING LINER, BLACKY'S UNCONSCIOUS BODY IS CARRIED DOWN A SELDOM-USED ESCAPE CORRIDOR... A MUFFLED ROARING SOUND BECOMES LOUDER..LOUDER...

OKAY, MITCH.. OPEN THAT HATCH AND WE'RE IN THE ENGINE ROOM!

THIS IS SURE A SLICK SCHEME, BLADE..AND WOULDN'T THE SYSTEM STAND ON ITS EAR IF THEY KNEW THE BOSS WAS A...

YOU TALK TOO MUCH, FOOL...AND THE ANGEL WOULDN'T LIKE IT! JUST CLAM UP AND HELP ME GET THIS OXY HELMET ADJUSTED!

AS IN THE DODGER'S CABIN..

NOW TO SHOVE HIM INTO THIS BRAKING ROCKET TUBE AND LOCK THE BREECH SO THE VACUUM OF SPACE'LL PULL HIM OUT WHERE THE ANGEL CAN GET HIM!

LOOK...A HELMETED BODY, SHOT OUT OF A IDLE ROCKET TUBE... SO THAT'S HOW IT'S DONE! AND THERE'S THE PICK-UP SHIP..

GET SET WITH THAT ATTRACTO-BEAM! HERE COMES BIRCH! EASE HIM IN...WE DON'T WANTA SQUASH UP A GOOD RANSOM PROSPECT!

LUCKY THEY CAN'T SEE US... NOW WE'LL TAIL THEM TO THEIR LAIR!

A FEW HOURS LATER...

THE RINGS OF SATURN! A PERFECT HIDEOUT...BUT WAIT...THEY'RE BLASTING TOWARD THAT PLANETOID.. THEY'LL CRASH AT THAT SPEED!

SUFFERIN' STARS, NO! ..A HUGE CRATER TRAP-DOOR! NOW THEY'RE INSIDE THE PLANETOID... AND THE DODGER'S TOO FAR AWAY TO FOLLOW THEM IN BEFORE IT CLOSES!

WAIT, STAR PIRATE.. ISN'T THAT A DEEP CREVICE, A FEW MILES NORTH OF THE CRATER? MAYBE IT LEADS TO THE INTERIOR!

LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE RIGHT, GIRL - I CAN SEE A GLOWING LIGHT DOWN THERE! STAY IN THE DODGER WHILE I TAKE A LOOK-SEE!

WEARING HIS ANTI-GRAV BOOTS AND AN OXY-HELMET, STAR PIRATE DESCENDS SWIFTLY INTO THE GLOOMY CREVICE, GUIDED BY THE WEIRD ILLUMINATION RISING FROM BELOW - AND, AT LAST

A SMALL CITY... SUSPENDED BY STEELITE GIRDERS FROM THE HOLLOWED-OUT SHELL OF THE PLANETOID! AND THERE'S BLACKY, BEING FORCED INTO THAT BUILDING!

AS...

JUST STAY PUT, BIRCH... THE ANGEL WILL BE HERE SOON, THEN WE'LL KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH YOU!

BLAST IT, WHERE'S STAR? I ALWAYS LAND IN A JAM...

GUARDS ALL AROUND... STRANGE - THEY SEEM TO BE VERY MUCH ON THE ALERT, AS IF THEY'D BEEN WARNED! I'LL JUMP FOR THAT WINDOW!

A SUDDEN SURGE OF IRON MUSCLES, AND..

GODS OF SPACE, THAT WAS CLOSE - GOOD OLD ANTI-GRAV BOOTS! THE GUARDS UNSUSPECTING... NOW TO HIKE MYSELF UP ON THE SILL!

SO THAT'S THE KIDNAPPERS' BOSS! HEY I KNOW THAT VOICE! SO THE GUARDS WERE WARNED... I'LL HAVE TO ACT FAST!

YOU'VE DONE WELL, MEN, AND THE ANGEL HAS NOT BEEN IDLE! I HAVE TRAPPED A PERFECT DUPE, AND WE WILL USE HIM TO COVER OUR TRAIL!

NOW, AFTER WE RANSOM OUR IMPRISONED BIG-SHOTS, THE SOLAR POLICE WILL CAPTURE THE FAMOUS STAR PIRATE.. AND THERE WILL BE CONCLUSIVE EVIDENCE THAT HE IS GUILTY OF THESE KIDNAPPING! WE'LL BE IN THE CLEAR, AND... WAIT, THAT SOUND!

TIME FOR JUST ONE SHOT ..IT'D BETTER BE GOOD! AH-H. GOT IT DEAD CENTER! MY ANTI GRAV BOOTS WILL PROTECT ME!

IT'S STAR PIRATE! BUT HOW DID HE AVOID MY GUARDS? QUICK, FOOLS, STOP HIM. HE'S BLASTING THE GIPO-GRAVISCOPE!

THE FLOOR.... TIPPING OHH, SMASHING INTO THE WALL!

DIE, STAR PIRATE...NO, TOO LATE...THE MULTIPLE GRAVITY RIPS MY GUN FROM MY HAND!

GLORIFUL GANYMEDE, IT'S MAH BOY! NOW TO GRAB A HANDFULO' GOODIES! HEY—I CAN'T MOVE!

TAKE IT EASY, BLACKY...THE INCREASED GRAVITY HAS PARALYZED YOU, JUST AS IT HAS OUR KIDNAPPING PALS...I'LL HAVE TO LUG YOU OUT OF HERE! BUT FIRST I'LL SEND A DISTRESS SIGNAL TO BRING THE SPACE COPS— AND THEN

I'LL JUST UNMASK OUR VILLIAN.... OR SHOULD I SAY, VILLIANESS! GOOD DAY, MISS 'RANGE!" YOU'RE QUITE A CONVINCING LIAR—BUT YOU MADE ONE BAD SLIP!

LATER...

...NO BIG SHOT NAMED RANGE WAS KIDNAPPED, SO I KNEW YOUR STORY WAS A PHONY! BUT I THOUGHT YOU WERE AN OVER-AMBITIOUS REPORTER— UNTIL I HEARD THE "ANGEL" SPEAK! COME ON, BLACKY...I'LL CARRY YOU, AND YOU CARRY THE JEWELS!

OKAY, STAR, POUR ON THE JUICE, AND LET'S GET OUTA HERE... I'M ALLERGIC TO SPACE COPS... AND I SEE AN I.P.S. SHIP ROUNDIN' SATURN!

THE PRISONERS HAVE BEEN RELEASED. I GUESS THAT CLEANS UP THE KIDNAPPING MYSTERY!

YEAH? TAKE A LOOK AT THESE GLITTERING GIMCRACKS, AND THEN ADMIT THAT WE REALLY CLEANED UP!

STAR PIRATE
IN EVERY ISSUE OF
PLANET COMICS!!

STAMPS

by SIDNEY M. ELIAS

WORLD'S RAREST STAMP

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This is but one of the many scarce errors and in future issues I will tell you about them. In the meantime, check over your stamps and when you go to the post office next, look over your purchase for maybe you may find a scarce error which was overlooked by postal examiners—

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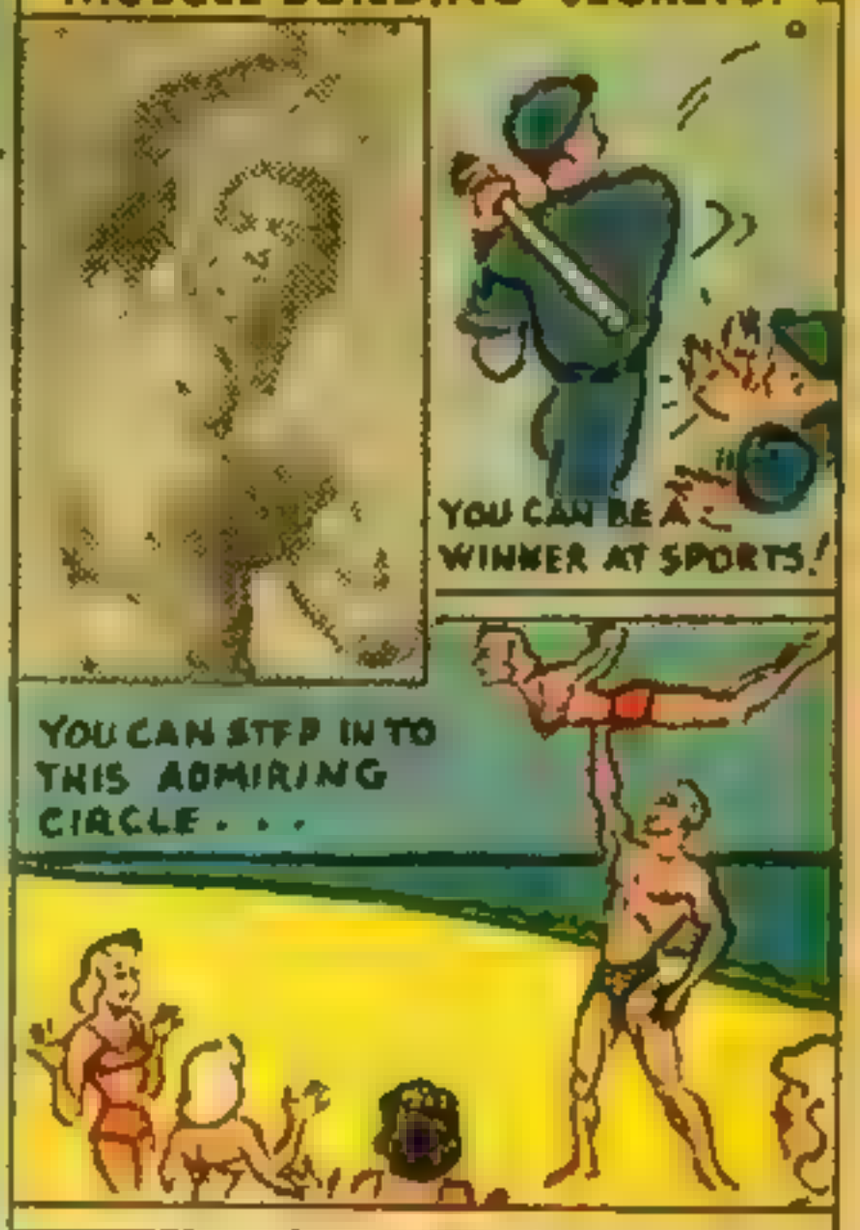

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MYSTA

OF THE MOON

By ROSS CALLUN

"ATTENTION! IT IS DIRECTED THAT ALL MEMBERS OF THE SAFETY COUNCIL SUBMIT THEMSELVES TO A SPECIAL IDENTITY CHECK. TECHNICIANS REPORT TO THE SECURITY OFFICE AT ONCE!" SO BLARED THE COMMUNICATOR. AND MYSTA OF THE MOON – SOLE POSSESSOR OF THE SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE OF THE UNIVERSE – DISGUISED NOW AS TECHNICIAN GRADE THREE, WONDERED...

AND NOW AS SECURITY AGENTS READ OFF HER NORM-MEASUREMENTS FROM THE SHADOW GRAPH...

AHAH...THIS IS THE STRANGEST CASE SO FAR! PUT HER AUTOO-ANALYSIS IN THE COMPARATOR MACHINE – WE'LL FIND OUT WHO SHE IS!

BUT YOU'RE MAKING A MISTAKE – I'VE ALREADY TOLD YOU WHO I AM!

YES, YOU SAID YOU WERE ANA THANE, TECHNICIAN 3 OF THE SAFETY COUNCIL. YOU MAY STEP DOWN NOW.

I AM ANA THANE, I DO WORK FOR THE SAFETY COUNCIL – DIRK GARRO WILL IDENTIFY ME. I DON'T SEE...

THE FACT REMAINS – ACCORDING TO OUR RECORDS AND ANALYSIS BY THE COMPARATOR – THERE IS NO SUCH PERSON AS ANA THANE!

SO THE QUESTION REMAINS - WHO ARE YOU?

OH, I'M SICK AND TIRED OF ALL THIS DOUBLE-TALK! WAIT - SOMETHING'S FLASHING ON THE CALL BOARD.

IT'S FOR ME! I HOPE YOU FIND OUT WHO I AM WHILE I'M GONE, MISS SECURITY AGENT!

TECHNICIAN 3 WANTED AT ROCKET LAUNCHING RAMP AT ONCE...GARRO-

YES. THAT WILL GIVE ME A CHANCE TO GO OVER YOUR PHYSIO ANALYSIS MORE THOROUGHLY! AND THEN...

MEANWHILE, IN THE VIDEO ROOM AT THE LAUNCHING STATION...

THAT CALL FOR HELP - IT FADED... WAIT! THERE IT IS AGAIN - CLEARER THIS TIME.

GARRO! AT LAST I HAVE CONTACTED YOU. I AM JUSTIN, EMPEROR OF AQUA, THE WATER PLANET. A STRANGE MECHANICAL GIANT IS DESTROYING OUR CROPS, OUR CITIES.. LOOK!

THE VIDEO SCANNER SHIFTS, AND...

GREAT SCOTT! THAT MECHANICAL MONSTER — SMASHING THOSE BUILDINGS. AH, HERE COMES THE TECHNICIAN NOW.

YOUR CALL SOUNDED URGENT, DIRECTOR GARRO - SO I STOPPED AT THE ARMORY FOR THIS SPECIAL RAY RIFLE!

GOOD, WE'LL NEED IT HURRY, THE SAFETY MEN ARE ABOARD WE'VE GOT TO BLAST OFF FOR AQUA AT ONCE!

OFF INTO SPACE ZOOMS THE SAFETY COUNCIL JET SHIP, OFF TO THE LITTLE KNOWN LAND OF AQUA, WATER PLANET, WHICH FURNISHES FOOD FOR THE UNIVERSE FROM ITS ACRES AND ACRES OF UNDERSEA HYDRO-FARMS. AND SOON...

I KNOW SO LITTLE ABOUT THIS STRANGE WORLD - I WONDER WHAT THE CAUSE OF THIS TROUBLE IS?

PROBABLY SOME INTERNAL STRIFE — LOOK, THERE'S JUSTIN THE AQUA PEOPLE'S LEADER...

YES, I SEE - COME, TECHNICIAN. WE'LL QUESTION HIM. THE REST OF YOU WAIT HERE.

OUR PEOPLE, THE AQUAS, HAVE ALWAYS BEEN FIGHTING THE EVIL HYDRAS. BUT NOW AN EARTHMAN CALLED KARK IS LEADING THEM WITH THIS GIANT MONSTER.

KARK? WHY, HE WAS OUSTED FROM THE UNIVERSAL COUNCIL ON FOOD FOR BRIBERY. THIS IS PROBABLY HIS IDEA OF REVENGE.

MINUTES LATER...

HE MUST BE STOPPED, OR THE UNIVERSE WILL STARVE. COME, YOUR HELMETS HAVE BEEN ADJUSTED - WE WILL GO BELOW!

SECONDS PASS, THEN THE DESCENTO CAPSULE PLUNGES DOWN TOWARD THE OCEAN FLOOR...

AND BELOW...

THE MONSTER HAS NOT ATTACKED THIS SECTOR YET. COME, I WILL SHOW YOU AROUND OUR UNDERSEA FARM!

BUT SUDDENLY...

WHAT! THE WORKERS ARE RUNNING OFF - THAT COMMOTION AHEAD -

LOOK! COMING TOWARD US! RUN FOR YOUR LIVES!

THEN PLODDING THROUGH THE SHIMMERING GREEN WATER, THE METAL GIANT SMASHES EVERYTHING IN ITS PATH..

AND INSIDE THE SHAMBLING MONSTER ..

HEEK! FULL SPEED FORWARD!

AYE! WE ARE IN THE MIDST OF THEIR BIGGEST FARM NOW. THEY ALL FLEE!

WHILE..

HERE IT COMES! A GOOD THING I HAD THE PLANS TO BUILD THIS WATER RIFLE.

THERE! FULL FORCE ELECTRO PRESSURE - THAT OUGHT TO GIVE THEM A JOLT INSIDE!

LOOK, TECHNICIAN, YOUR RIFLE BLAST HAS HALTED IT!

AS INSIDE...

AHH! CONTACT KARK, OUR LEADER - QUICKLY!

AYE! HO, KARK - HELP US, HELP US!

AND THE MESSAGE CRACKLES UNDERWATER TO KARK, EVIL LEADER OF THE HYDRAS, AT HIS HIDEOUT...

HEEK! HELP US, KARK - OUR MONSTER HAS BEEN STOPPED BY SOME STRANGE FORCE! HELP!

GET THE SEA DRAGONS OUT - ELECTRO SPEARS, QUICKLY! WE MUST ATTACK NOW!

MEANWHILE, BACK IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL OFFICE ON EARTH...

THERE, I'VE DOUBLE-CHECKED TECHNICIAN 3 S COMPARATOR RECORD - AND IT STILL COMES OUT THE SAME!

SHE SAYS SHE IS ANA THANE, YET THERE IS NO SUCH PERSON! IF I TELL THAT TO GARRO HE'LL THINK I'M LOONEY! PERHAPS I'D BETTER JUST CLOSE THE FILES ON THIS CASE - HMM...

AS ON THE WATER-PLANET...

MY ELECTRO SHOCK DISABLED THE GIANT!

YES, AND IT PROBABLY KNOCKED THE OPERATORS OUT! COME ON, WE'LL BOARD IT!

FOLLOW ME! I HAVE A FEELING THAT KARK WILL ATTACK AGAIN! THIS WILL GIVE US SOME PROTECTION!

LOOK! EVEN AS YOU SPEAK - HE COMES!

AND INSTANTLY, THE NEW TERROR SWEEPS DOWN THROUGH THE OCEAN WATERS...

ATTENTION, HYDRAS - THEY HAVE TAKEN REFUGE IN OUR DISABLED METAL GIANT! ATTACK!

HYDRAS ON SEAHORSES, LED BY KARK! WHAT CAN WE DO?

COURAGE, JUSTIN! QUICKLY, AQUAS, HELP ME MAN THIS FORCE GUN!

HAH! THE MAN I HATE MOST, THE ONE PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR MY OUSTER - TRAPPED! HE IS GOING TO DIE, AND THE UNIVERSE WILL COME TO TERMS WITH ME! HURL YOUR SPEARS - WHAT!

SUDDEN FORCE RIPPLES THE WATER, AND...

THAT FORCE... KNOCKING MY HYDRAS AWAY! ONE CHANCE - I MUST RAM THE MONSTER!

AND INSIDE

IT'S KARK - AND HE'S GOING TO SMASH US HEAD ON! THAT FIRST JOLT TOOK CARE OF THE HYDRAS.. I HOPE THERE'S ENOUGH FORCE LEFT TO STOP HIM! HERE GOES...

ONE LAST SHATTERING EXPLOSIVE OF ENERGY, AND...

HELP! I'M SMASHING AGAINST A WALL OF PURE FORCE! AAH!

THERE! JUST ENOUGH TO DISABLE HIS SHIP AND KNOCK HIM UNCONSCIOUS! WE CAN CAPTURE HIM, NOW THAT THE HYDRAS ARE RUNNING OFF!

SOON KARK HAS BEEN CAPTURED AND HIS HYDRAS WILL NEVER HAVE STRENGTH TO RISE AGAINST US AGA'N! THE UNIVERSE'S FOOD SUPPLY IS SAVED - THANKS TO BOTH OF YOU!

WE ONLY PERFORMED OUR DUTY, JUSTIN. BUT WE ACCEPT YOUR THANKS - AND NOW WE MUST BE OFF.

LATER...

GOODBYE, AQUAS!

HMM... I WONDER HOW THAT SECURITY AGENT MADE OUT?

AND STILL LATER, AS THE SAFETY SPACER ROARS EARTHWARD..

LOOK, THE VIDEO, WHY, IT'S SECURITY AGENT G Y. WHAT'S UP?

ER, THE SECURITY REPORT ON TECHNICIAN 3 HAS BEEN CLEARED AND EVERYTHING IS OKAY. WE ARE CLOSING THE FILES ON THE CASE.

WELL! THAT WAS A NARROW SQUEAK! I THOUGHT FOR SURE SHE WOULD KNOW WHO I AM. HO HUM - ALL'S WELL THAT END'S WELL!

THE END

THE SONG OF DHU

By THORNECLIFFE HERRICK

I HAD the information—the location of the power plants that supplied *odanna* to Earth's anti-atom screens—but getting it, and myself, out of their underground War City seemed an almost impossible task.

Everywhere I turned were the wary figures of Patrolmen, guarding the seven exit tubes to the surface, ranging along the sleek metal roads that fed this great nerve center of Earth's defenses. Yes, I had the information—and could not get it to Jupiter. And Jupiter, my world, was losing the war for lack of it.

My disguise as an Earthman was excellent, and afforded me undisputed passage through the city—to theatres and shops, to dining establishments—but not *out* of the city; for since the discovery of my theft of the secret maps, *no one* had been permitted to enter or leave. For two days now the War City had been cut off from the outside—and would be, until those precious maps were recovered. And I would die to prevent that. . . .

So it was a very pretty problem indeed. How I cursed that stupid orderly I'd had to kill in the office of the Earth Commander—if he hadn't happened to blunder in, I might have escaped to my spaceship in the Dakota hills nearby before an alarm could be sounded. However, recriminations are less than useless. The orderly served his world well by his death, for now there was no way—utterly no way—for me to escape with my stolen secret. Not only that, my hours of freedom were numbered and slipping away in a game of hide and seek whose end—my final capture—was inevitable.

Just once I attempted to bluff it through:

"But I must leave," I insisted. "These orders explain my urgent and secret business in Area Six, Brazil."

The armed guard shrugged and referred me to the Exit Major, to whom I repeated my demand. And when the Major started to telescreen War Central to check on my forged orders I had to kill him, naturally. Then I ran, managing to elude the pursuing guard . . . all of which served only to give the Patrolmen a description of my disguise, which I changed immediately.

Then I remembered. I remembered a man, his name. Walking the broad, busy avenues, despairing of my mission, with military guards searching for me from roof to sub-cellar, I remembered and went to Olin Decker. Have you heard of Professor Decker? No, unless you are interested in archaeology, as I, you've probably not. But he is—or was—one of the Universe's great men.

As I have said, my disguise made me resemble an Earthian. My bald head was skillfully wigged, my slitted pupils were concealed by shells of glass, and I had suffered to have the webs between my fingers removed by surgery. Oh, beloved Jupiter, so far away, look at your son—has he done well? Or has he committed the crime of all Millenniums, a sin of sins . . .?

Olin Decker opened his office door. He was tall, very tall, and old, with mild blue eyes that nonetheless seemed to strike through mine to rock the back of my skull. Never have I felt so probed by the gaze of one man.

"I have an unusual request to make of you," I said.

His eyebrows lifted courteously. "I will be happy to hear you, Number . . .?"

"2068," I said—(have I mentioned that my clothing now was that of an official messenger of Earth?)

Olin Decker led me to his workroom, and as I followed him I studied the curios and artifacts that covered the walls. From ten worlds of Sol, from its twenty moons, from the lives of a thousand races and a thousand million years had these treasures come. Furs and weapons, works of art, mounted and primitive idols—things of life and of death, of the beginning and end of little worlds squeezed by the icy immensity of Space.

Olin Decker faced me across his desk . . . and although I knew what I must do, I found myself so intrigued by the man and his surroundings that I put the act off awhile.

"I imagine," I said, "that your knowledge of ancient things has been turned toward the winning of the war . . . to determine the racial weaknesses of the Jupitarians, perhaps?"

He smiled a little and shook his great head. "My work," he said softly, "does not touch upon War save in retrospect. There are good and evil in all things . . . oft said, but never less true for it, hurr? . . . and their balance is called Progress. War or no war, I perform my researches in the cause of knowledge, not savagery. But . . . your request, 2068?"

"It will wait," I said—and at that moment

my eyes fell upon a leathern folio that lay open on the desk, saw within a sheaf of parchment whose jeweled binding was sparked red and gold by the soft lights. *San*—my cheeks were suddenly cold, I half rose from my chair. "What is this," I burst out, "you have the manuscript of the Song of Dhu . . .?"

The eyes of Olin Decker bored into me again. He spoke slowly: "You surprise me . . . a messenger? Yes, this is the sacred Song of Dhu. It fell into our hands when Jupiter's museum-moon of Gala surrendered to our space navy. Surely you have heard of this?"

"And forgotten . . ." I replied. I had resumed my seat and was outwardly calm, though my hands were damp and trembling, grasping at each other unseen below the desktop. "How . . .?"

"Since the manuscript is of no military value," he explained, "it was given to me. I have long desired to study it." His eyes brightened, he leaned forward. "You are a student? You are familiar with their mythology?"

"Not very," I said carefully. "I do know that the Song of Dhu is the Key to the prehistory of Jupiter—that its symbols explain the dark beginnings of the clouded planet."

"Aye. . . ." He got up and commenced to walk the floor, his face animated. "And I have deciphered it, 2068. I alone now know of the incredible glory that was Jupiter. . . . Her ancient cities, now centuries buried beneath new civilizations . . . her art, her music sublime . . . the magnificent beauty of ages past . . ."

"Beauty?" I said with caution. "The glory of a beast people? You speak oddly for an Earthian."

"I speak as a man. We are all men, hurr? Earth and Jupiter . . . who is to say which is unhuman? . . . for both are humanoid, with two arms, two legs. I . . . wars do not interest me, 2068. I have lived through three wars and I shall probably see yet another, for the world of Volta will most certainly attack the victor in the present conflict. Ah . . ." he sat down and looked sadly at me: "Listen to me, 2068. Let us forget war. Listen, while I tell you of the Jupiter that was . . ."

Listen. Did I need his admonition to listen, when any son of Jupiter would have died a thousand deaths to know the mysteries of the Sacred, never-translated Song of Dhu?

"When the Sun was born," said Olin Decker, reading from the manuscript, "her children forsook her, wandering. And among these, Jupiter was first to flower, first to fountain forth the miracle of Life. This we know, for our ships have flown on wings of flame to our sister worlds and found them barren; our scientists have searched, and nowhere but on Jupiter do such as we exist . . ." He paused with a smile. "That refers, of course, to the very first Age of Sol, before Earth also spawned sentient life. There follows a description of what is termed the Era of Golden Heros. Shall I . . .?"

My voice came out hoarsely. "Please . . . please go on."

"And our cities reached to the high, hovering winds: our alabaster towers kissed the sun. The green of growing things was the horizon, and the clouds themselves paused in wonderment at such beauty. . . ."

His voice read on, and it seemed that his face was strangely sober, as though the vanished glory of Jupiter, transmuted to poetry on the parchment he held, had captured and enchanted him too. I watched that wise, that very old, wise face and wept silently . . . wept with joy at the sound of such magnificence, with infinite sorrow that it must again be lost to the mind and soul of Sol.

How cruel . . . how horrible . . . that this must be the man. Why, of *all* men, must he be the means of communicating my secret knowledge to my people? This man, whose research had uncovered and made real and alive the heritage of my people; whose mind must now be forever stilled, and with it, the priceless Song of Dhu.

As he read, as he read to me of the ages lost glories of my world, I drew my gun. He did not feel pain . . . he died instantly. And I sat waiting for the Patrolman to answer the roar of my pistol.

I allowed myself to be captured of course; my act would have been valueless without the association of my name with his. And later that same day, as I'd known they would, the Earthmen sent a mocking spaceogram to my people, telling them that I had been caught and imprisoned after my incredibly clumsy murder of the renowned archaeologist, Olin Decker. They suggested that my people send another spy, a more expert one.

But Jupiter sent no more spies. No; its Secret Service of which I am a member, saw the message implicit in my act of murder. Olan, you see, is our code-word for "Attack"—and within hours of my capture, the warships of Jupiter came screaming from the sky to destroy the power plants of Earth's anti-atom screens in the city of Dakar on the remote African coast of this enemy world.

Enemy? As I wait to be released I do not smile or cheer. I see the face of Olin Decker. I am sad. I am heartbroken. For my world has won the future . . . but my world has lost its past.

Futura

BY JOHN DOUGLAS -

AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SILVERY SEA THAT COVERS OCEANIA, FUTURA IS HELD CAPTIVE IN A CAVE. HERE RULE THREE HEADS, WHOSE BODIES ARE LONG TENDRILS SUBMERGED IN VASES. THEIR THREATS HAD FAILED TO FORCE THE EARTH GIRL TO DISCLOSE THE SECRET OF HER ROBOT SPACER-GUIDE, SO BY ORDER OF THESE DEMONS, REPLICAS OF FUTURA AND BLARGO WERE MOLDED. THESE ARE EXACT DUPLICATES WHICH KNOW AND TELL ALL HIDDEN SECRETS IN THEIR PROTOTYPES' BRAINS AND NOW FUTURA SITS AND PONDERS - "WHAT CAN I DO? MUST I STAND BY AND SEE THIS HEARTLESS TRIO ESCAPE AND RULE THE UNIVERSE?"

AND ALL THIS WHILE, THE HEADS SMIRK AND NOD IN APPROVAL OF THEIR MAGIC. THEN THOUGHT WAVES FROM THE GIRL BOMBARD THE GUARDS. "QUESTION THOSE REPLICAS AT ONCE, FOR WITHIN ONE SHORT HOUR THEY WILL FADE! PROD THEM FOR THE EXPLOSIVE GAS FORMULA USED IN THE ROCKET CHAMBERS OF THEIR SPACER!"

HORRIFIED, SHE WATCHES THE WEIRD PROCEEDINGS... LISTENS AS HER OWN IMAGE-FIGURE BABBLES ALL HER SECRETS..

INSTANTLY, THE PROTECTORS PLY FUTURA'S REPLICA WITH QUERIES... WHILE IN A NEARBY CORNER, SHE AND BLARGO SIT NEGLECTED... EXCEPT FOR THE EVER PRESENT KEEPER AND HIS GUN.

"I MUST STOP HER!" FUTURA MURMURS THEN WHISPERS TO BLARGO, "WE WILL FIGHT... FOLLOW ME!"

FURY UNLEASHED... SHE HURLS HERSELF AT HER CAPTORS, BUT STRONG ARMS ENCIRCLE HER ..

...CAST HER CRASHING INTO THE TRANSLUCENT CAPSULES. DAZED AND WEAKENED, SHE FALLS... BEATEN!

BUT NOT SURRENDERING! A SUDDEN INSPIRATION-FLASH FLOODS HER MIND, "WHATEVER I THINK WILL CRYSTALIZE IN MY REPLICA'S THOUGHTS," SHE MUSES.

AS FROM THE PEDESTAL, SILENT COMMANDS FLOOD THE ROOM...

"SUBDUE THAT BLARGO PERSON... ATTEND THE UNCONSCIOUS GIRL!"

SO GUARDS SURROUND THE STILL UNCONQUERED BLARGO... WHILE OTHERS GENTLY LIFT FUTURA'S INERT BODY, "STUNNED AND HELPLESS," THEY AGREE.

BUT HOW DECEIVED THEY ARE... FOR FUTURA'S BRAIN IS ACTIVE... SHE CONCENTRATES, RECALLS A PAST EVENT... WHEN MENTOR LIVED!

AT FIRST THE THOUGHTS ARE SLOW IN COMING... THEN SUDDENLY BURST FORTH AND CRYSTALIZE WITHIN HER BRAIN...

...AND SHE ENVISIONS STRUGGLING COMRADES FIGHTING SYNTHOS AS SHE SEEKS THE SECRET COMBINATION TO FREEDOM.

AND NOW THE FIGURES GROW SHARPER AS SHE VISUALIZES HERSELF IN MENTOR'S UNDERGROUND CAVERNS... AGAIN SHE RELIVES THE TERRIBLE EXPERIENCE OF DAYS LONG PAST... SHE SEES HERSELF TRYING FRANTICALLY TO FIND THE ELUSIVE COMBINATION THAT WILL FREE HER FRIENDS... HEARS THEIR URGENT PLEAS...

"HURRY, FUTURA, FOR MENTOR WILL SEND MORE SHADOW BEINGS TO CAPTURE US," ONE BEGS.

"SUCCESS... THE TUMBLERS FALL! OPEN WIDE THE DOOR," SHE ORDERS

"MORE OF MENTOR'S MONSTERS! FLEE, COMRADES, THEY'RE REACHING FOR US — OH, I AM CAUGHT!"

SO VIVIDLY HAS FUTURA THOUGHT UP THE GROTESQUE SCENE, IT IS TRANSPLANTED IN HER REPLICA'S MIND. IT SEES THE MONSTER REACHING FOR HER!

IT SCREAMS IN TERROR, TURNS TO FLEE - STUMBLES IN THE REPLICA APPARATUS.

A BRILLIANT FLASH... A TERRIFYING THUNDER NOISE.

THE SCREAMS OF BLINDED GUARDS ECHOE THE ROTUNDA.

"WATCH THAT GIRL! WATCH THAT GIRL!" THE HEADS SHRIEK SILENT THOUGHT WAVES. "SHE DID THIS!"

CONFUSION REIGNS... FUTURA PLUNGES AT THE BEFUDDLED KEEPERS. BLARGO LEAPS AGAIN TO HELP...

"THE FLOOR AND CEILING ARE CRACKING!" FUTURA CRIES, "THIS FIGHT WE WILL WIN, BLARGO!"

AND INSTANTLY, WATER GUSHES FROM THE WIDENING SPLIT— MORE CONFUSION AS THE GUARDS FLEE IN TERROR

"I'VE FOUND A SWORD. NOW LET THEM TRY TO STOP ME. COME, BLARGO... TO OUR SPACESHIP—HURRY!"

THEY GAIN THE TURRET. OTHERS TRY TO CROWD INSIDE BUT BLARGO FLINGS THEM BACK. "QUICK CLIMB ABOARD," SHE SHOUTS, "I WILL FIRE THE ROCKET!"

NOW COLD AND CALCULATING STUDY. HASTE IS FORGOTTEN, FOR DIALS MUST BE SET WITH EXACT PRECISION, THE FAULTS IN THE CRACKING CEILING SURVEYED WITH UNDERSTANDING.

HER DECISION COMES METEOR-FAST... BLAST-CANNONS FIRE AT THOSE CRACKS... FOR THEY MUST BE WIDENED... MADE LARGE ENOUGH TO ADMIT THE SPACER!

AND OUTSIDE, ANKLE DEEP IN WATER, MEN CLAMOR TO GET INSIDE. BUT NO CHANCE. FUTURA IS IN COMMAND... "LET THOSE WICKED CREATURES DIE!"

NOW THE CANNON'S RAYS HAVE SPLIT THE CAVERN'S ROOF, AND A SILVERY CATARACT THUNDERS DOWNWARD... STRAIGHT TOWARD THAT OPENING FUTURA POINTS THE SPACER

"WE HAVE SACRIFICED OUR BODIES AND SOULS... DEVELOPED OUR BRAINS TO HEIGHTS NEVER BEFORE ATTAINED... AND THIS EARTHLING HAS DEFEATED US, MADE US APPEAR AS MENTAL MIDGETS," ONE HEAD TRANSMITS IN SHIVERY THOUGHT WAVES .

"AND NOW WE DIE. BUT WE WILL HAVE OUR REVENGE. I HAVE A WAY!" COMES THE GIRL'S REPLY.

"OUR PEDESTAL'S BROKEN, SO HOW?" ONE QUESTIONS IN A BUNGLE.

BUT ABOVE, FUTURA STEERS STRAIGHT TOWARD THE NARROW OPENING... "WILL WE MAKE IT, BLARGO?"

"WE PASS THE ROCK WALLS... ARE SURROUNDED BY WATER," BLARGO WATCHES FROM THE PORTHOLE, "MORE POWER, FUTURA, MORE POWER!"

AS OUTSIDE, ABOVE THE GLIMMERING WAVES, AN ANCIENT FISHERMEN'S SPACER SUDDENLY SLOWS...

"LOOK THERE!" THE LOOKOUT SCREAMS, "THAT RISING BUBBLE! IS IT SOME NEW AQUA-MONSTER?"

INSTANTLY THE CREW CROWD THE LOOKOUT TOWERS, POINTING AND BABBLING IN SHRILL EXCITEMENT...

"IT EMERGES!" ONE CRIES, "WHY... IT IS A GIANT SPACER!"

FOR THE THING IS FUTURA'S SHIP. SHE HAS PILOTED IT TO THE SURFACE AND FREEDOM...

BUT TOO SOON HER ELATION... A DISMAL CRASH, AND THE NOSE OF FUTURA'S SPACER CRUMBLES.

"FINDERS KEEPERS!" SHRILL THE FISHERMEN PLUNGING FROM THEIR PLATFORM. "WE WILL LOOT IT!"

AND SOON, OUTSIDE A PORTHOLE, ONE STOPS AND PEERS INSIDE, "SHE IS MY PRIZE!" HE CRIES...

"I SAW HER FIRST! I GO WITHIN TO SEIZE HER!"

"SHE IS MY PRISONER, LET NO MAN CLAIM HER!" HE WARNS, AND BURSTS INTO THE COMPARTMENT.

"WHAT MANNER OF BEAST IS THIS?" BLARGO ASKS. AND FUTURA ANSWERS, "SOME GREEDY THING HOPING FOR RANSOM. WE ARE IN FOR TROUBLE, FRIEND!"

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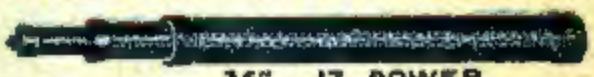

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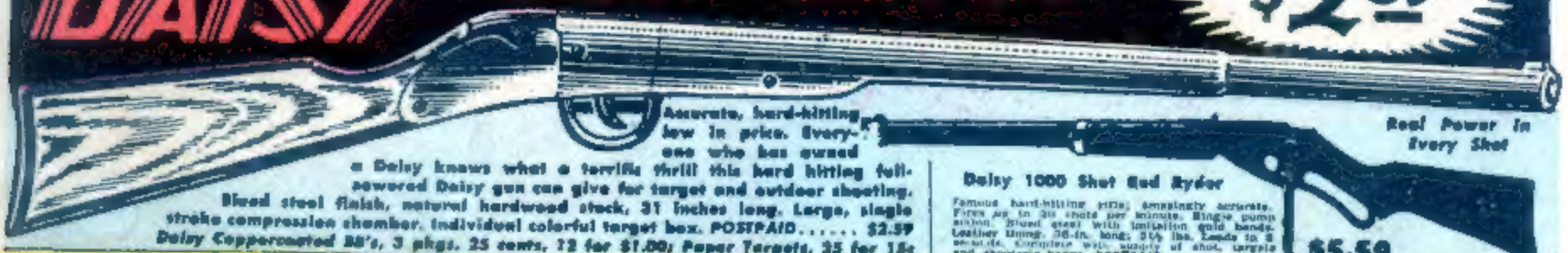

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